Decline in fertility of land in Western U.P.

†144. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that fertile land in Western Uttar Pradesh is turning into barren land;

(b) the reasons for decreasing fertility of the land; and

(c) the steps being taken to improve the fertility of the land?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) Over exploitation of natural resources, imbalanced and indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers and lesser use of organic matter over years have resulted deterioration of soil health and fertility in the intensively cultivated areas, especially in Western Uttar Pradesh.

(c) The State Government of Uttar Pradesh has intimated the following steps to improve soil health and fertility during 2009.10:

(i) Green Manuring in 59,630 ha.

(ii) Demonstration of 58444 Vermi/NADEP Compost.

(iii) Testing of 5,79,000 soil sample for the recommendation of balanced use of fertilizers/manures and distribution of 5,79,000 Soil Health Cards.

(iv) Opening of 63 Tehsil Level Soil Testing Labs.

(v) Distribution of 816706 bio-fertilizer packets.

(vi) Distribution of 34457 metric tones of gypsum.

The Government of India is implementing two major schemes in the country; (i) National Project on Organic Farming to promote organic manures for improvement of soil health; and (ii) National Project on Management of Soil Health and Fertility to promote soil test based balanced and judicious use of chemical fertilizers in conjunction with organic manures.

Container freight station at Kochi

145. SHRI ABDUL WAHAB PEEVEE: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has decided to set up a container freight station at Kochi in Kerala in near future;

(b) if so, the cost involved in the project; and

(c) the jobs likely to be created?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) Yes, Sir. Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC), a Public Sector Undertaking under the

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

administrative control of Department of Food and Public Distribution, has planned to set up a Container Freight Station facility at Udyogmandal, Kochi in association with Fertilizer and Chemical Travancore Ltd. (FACT) Kochi, a public sector undertaking under Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers as per Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with FACT on 03.05.2008.

(b) and (c) The cost involved in the project and the jobs likely to be created are yet to be worked out.

SAZ to boost agriculture production

†146. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of the steep fall in production of agriculture items and phenomenal increase in the prices of essential food items;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government is working on a plan for setting up Special Agriculture Zone to boost agriculture production;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) There has been no steep fall in the production of food grains. As per final estimates of 2007-08 food grain production at 230.78 Million tones was recorded. As per third Advance Estimates for the year 2008-09, production of food grain is likely to be at 229.85 Million Tonnes. The Government is aware of the increase in prices of essential food items during the year 2008-09. The prices of essential commodities were closely monitored and various measures were taken to augment supplies and stabilize prices of certain essential commodities. Rise in domestic prices was owing to the combined effect of factors such as, growing demand on account of increase in population and income, hardening of international prices, changes in consumption pattern, etc. Government has been taking effective steps to moderate the prices.

(c) to (e) As of now there is no proposal under consideration to Establish SAZ. However, for the development of Agriculture Sector, a number of initiatives and plan scheme are being implemented, which includes Rastriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), National Food Security Mission (NFSM), National Horticulture Mission (NHM) Macro Management of Agriculture (MMA) and Micro Irrigation etc.

Cultivation problems in small agriculture plots

147. SHRI JAI PRAKASH NARAYAN SINGH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that with the division of agricultural land, number of agriculture plots have increased specially in hilly areas;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.